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TRAINING ACADEMY TO OFFER METHAMPHETAMINE SEMINAR TO STATE'S FIRST RESPONDERS

Bell Buckle, TN. – The Tennessee Fire Service and Codes Enforcement Academy will offer a new Methamphetamine (meth) seminar for state and local firefighters and law enforcement personnel.

The Methamphetamine Hazards and Awareness Seminar, presented by the Tennessee National Guard Drug Suppression Task Force, is designed for Tennessee's law enforcement personnel, firefighters and other first responders who are exposed to meth and its highly toxic by-products.

"Methamphetamine labs have become a serious emergency response issue because of the hazardous nature of the chemicals that are involved in meth production," said David Hedrick, Fire Service Program Director. "Every day, Tennesseans are put at risk because of the health dangers and the environmental effects of meth labs, and our emergency responders are the ones on the front lines."

The Academy's first Methamphetamine Hazards and Awareness Seminar will be held on June 12, 2004 and is open to law enforcement and firefighters across Tennessee. Hedrick said additional seminars likely will be scheduled because of the high demand for meth training statewide. "This seminar is another example of the comprehensive, inexpensive training the Academy can provide for our emergency personnel across the state," Hedrick said.

Toxic gas leaks, chemical fires and explosions often occur during meth production, putting first responders and the surrounding community at great risk. The chemicals used during meth production are volatile and very toxic. The production of just one pound of methamphetamine creates 5 to 7 pounds of toxic waste. Contaminated ground resulting from a meth lab is considered so dangerous that it is treated as a bio-hazardous waste scene. The cleanup requires specialized training and can cost anywhere from \$3,100.00 to \$150,000.00 depending on the size of the lab.

The environmental dangers and health risks associated with the manufacturing process are extremely serious, especially to unsuspecting victims. Meth labs can be found anywhere and responders often "stumble" upon these clandestine labs by accident. Common injuries include respiratory and eye irritation, headache, nausea and vomiting and shortness of breath. Severe

injuries can occur resulting in disfigurement or death. Providing the necessary information to first responders is a necessity.

“Tennessee accounts for more than 75% of methamphetamine lab seizures in the southeast portion of the United States,” said Instructor Sgt. Jimmy Tarver, National Guard Operations NCO. “More lab seizures take place in this state than in most of the surrounding states combined.”

The seminar is intended to help firefighters and law enforcement officials recognize the signs of meth labs and to take the necessary steps to ensure not only their own safety but to the safety of the citizens from the surrounding area as well. In addition to these topics, discussion will include Tennessee’s drug problem and possible solutions, the history of meth, physiological effects and signs of abuse.

The Tennessee Fire Service and Codes Enforcement Academy, located in northern Bedford County, is a premier educational facility that offers the latest in training technology, state-of-the-art equipment and a full spectrum of educational courses to emergency service first responders and to codes enforcement personnel.

The seminar is provided at a low cost of \$10.00 per participant. “The Academy offers low-cost training to all first responders because we know the budget constraints of our local communities and volunteer squads,” states David Hedrick. “This kind of training is crucial to maintaining public safety in our communities, and ultimately may save lives.”

The National Guard’s Task Force Methamphetamine Trailer will be available on site for tours as well.

Media inquiries should be directed to Karen Alexander at 931.294.4111.